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Summary record of the 5th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 4 October 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Haniff ..... (Malaysia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 27: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/66/124 and 226)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/66/62-E/2011/4, A/66/61-E/2011/3, A/66/121, 128, 129 and 136)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/66/173)

1. **Mr. Butt** (Pakistan) said that the global financial, fuel and food crises had resulted in a significant decline in trade and foreign direct investment in Pakistan. The recent floods in the country had further slowed economic activity and had had the most devastating effects on the poorest sectors. Despite the many difficulties facing the country, the Government remained focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), employing a multi-pronged strategy based on fostering sound economic management, improving governance, investing in human capital, and empowering women, minority youth and persons with disabilities.

2. A range of social protection programmes played an important role in poverty reduction efforts. They included programmes to provide funding for small businesses and micro-finance to the poorest people; benefits to orphans, persons with disabilities and the elderly; and internships and training opportunities to strengthen the workforce. In addition, Pakistan had recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

3. **Mr. Jafarov** (Azerbaijan) said that progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals was being undermined by the effects of the financial and economic crisis. While Governments must take responsibility for their own development, international cooperation should seek to support national efforts through supportive programmes. The Government of Azerbaijan had managed to mitigate the economic impacts of the crisis and maintain growth through careful management of the revenues generated by its oil and gas resources. In order to achieve lasting development, States must make social policies, such as universal social protection systems and labour programmes, an integral part of their macroeconomic policies, rather than implementing them as stopgap measures during times of crisis.

4. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities must be employed as an important tool to promote inclusive development into the international agenda. Since ratifying the Convention and its Optional Protocol, his Government had adopted measures to promote accessibility and develop national capacity to empower and improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities.

5. The occupation of nearly one fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan continued to undermine the social progress of the country. Hundreds of health facilities, schools and cultural institutions had been destroyed, and many residents had been displaced from their homes as a result of the aggression against his country.

6. The United Nations should provide the universal framework to address social development issues. For its part, Azerbaijan would remain committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and strengthening its national mechanisms to improve the situation of vulnerable groups.

7. **Mr. Sefue** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that, while his Government had made progress in meeting the commitments that it had undertaken under the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, unemployment and poverty remained challenges. Given that his country was largely rural, modernizing and improving agricultural production had been made a major priority. A multi-stakeholder initiative sought to make the agricultural value chain more efficient and included the participation of civil society, farmer organizations and the private sector. Legislation had been amended to provide women the possibility of land ownership and increase their participation in land tribunals.

8. Social inclusion and participatory development were the cornerstone of the Government's approach to policy formulation. Development encompassed people's material, social and psychological welfare and must respect their dignity and include their involvement. In that regard, a decentralization programme had devolved power to local governments and ensured the participation of citizens in the issues affecting their

lives. Policies devoted to the inclusion of vulnerable groups had been enacted, which included provision of social protection programmes for older persons. His delegation welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 65/186 on realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities and planned on co-sponsoring a similar resolution that year.

9. **Ms. Saddy** (Niger) said that her Government was fully committed to implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing as well as the African Union's framework for action on ageing. The Constitution of Niger guaranteed older persons full social protection, a right that was further articulated in its legislation on health, housing, poverty reduction and other areas of life. Equality and non-discrimination were also constitutional rights, while the abuse of older persons was punishable under the law.

10. Furthermore, the Government had instituted a division on older persons within its ministry on population, women and children and had created a coordinating council for relevant civil society organizations. Older persons were also free to remain actively engaged in community life free from any obstacles or discrimination. The constitutional rights afforded to older persons in Niger were evidence of a strong will to enable the full exercise of such rights. In that regard, a bill concerning the many challenges faced by older persons was currently under consideration.

11. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that the transitional government installed after the recent revolution had created an economic and social programme aimed at encouraging employment, investment, regional development, and social welfare. Steps taken included a short-term recruitment plan design to assist 240,000 job seekers; allocation of 80 per cent of investments to programmes for infrastructure, job creation, and improvement of regional living conditions; and an increase in funds allocated to 185,000 needy families, granting of microcredit, and allocations for improvement of housing of 20,000 families.

12. **Ms. Bonkoungou Kandolo** (Burkina Faso) said that her country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in July 2009. That had followed the establishment in 2005 of the Multisector Committee for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities; adoption in April 2010 of a law on protection and promotion of the rights of disabled persons; and adoption of a national strategy for 2011-2020 covering specific campaigns to protect and assist disabled persons, to be implemented in three-year action plans.

13. The 2006 population census had indicated that uneducated rural women constituted 53 per cent of the elderly population. Actions taken by the Government included the 2002 establishment of a National Council of Older Persons: implementation of a national health programme for the aged for 2008-2012; development of an action plan for 2012-2016 to fight social exclusion of persons believed to be witches; and socioeconomic encouragement of the aged via the National Solidarity Fund.

14. **Mr. Pinto da Silva** (Portugal) said that his country was strongly committed to the development and implementation of youth-related programmes, and reiterated its support for the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY). Recent actions had included the establishment in 2010 of a National Monitoring Commission for the International Year of Youth and the holding of the Second National Forum of Young Descendants of Immigrants and of the African Diaspora in February 2011.

15. **Ms. Rusaro Utamuliza** (Rwanda), speaking as a youth delegate, said that participation of African youth in the international dialogue on development was still very limited, including in the Committee's current discussion on youth issues. Rwanda, whose people were still healing from the 1994 Tutsi genocide, offered a promising example of policies and programmes aimed at mainstreaming youth into development plans, based on the framework provided by the Government's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals.

16. **Mr. Ntezimana** (Rwanda), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the long-term goal of the Rwandan Youth Sector Strategic Plan was to empower youth to participate in the sustainable social and economic transformation of the country. Medium-term goals included creating a supportive policy environment for youth and enhancing their productive capacity, in line with the broader vision of transforming the agrarian economy into a knowledge-based economy, creating a productive middle class and fostering entrepreneurship.

17. Poverty, unemployment and health-related challenges were major constraints to youth

development and threatened political stability, while policy planning and implementation needed improvement. The support of the international community in addressing such issues was of critical importance. He called on Member States to develop a programme for youth from least developed countries aimed at building their entrepreneurial education and providing them access to loans; assist least developed countries in establishing national centres for the transfer of technology and scientific knowledge; and to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and implementation of the Rwandan Youth Sector Strategic Plan. Lastly, the establishment of a new United Nations agency on youth could play a decisive role in addressing pressing issues affecting this group throughout the world.

18. **Mr. Sena Fañas** (Dominican Republic), speaking as a youth delegate, said that young job-seekers in the Dominican Republic faced problems of training, guidance, and lack of decent jobs, with consequent poor development of skills, poverty, and low income, all of which constituted threats to social cohesion. Although young people, who constituted the largest sector of the Dominican population, were better educated than previous generations, job insecurity was impeding their participation in society.

19. Technical and occupational training was necessary along with access to university education and job-creation plans to facilitate their economic inclusion. An analysis was needed of the impact of young people in the formal economy in order to expand opportunities for youth and to promote development of programmes to eradicate poverty and guarantee access to health and quality education, decent work, and food and nutritional security.

20. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka) said that since the end of the struggle with terrorism and the restoration of political stability, the Northern Province had achieved GDP growth of 22 per cent. Overall GDP growth in the country had been consistently averaging over 8 per cent, and unemployment stood at a record low of 4.5 per cent. According to the World Economic Forum in its Global Competitiveness Report for 2011-2012, Sri Lanka had moved from 79th to 52nd place in two years.

21. The youth population represented 26 per cent of the 20 million people of Sri Lanka. Despite the continuing problem of unemployment in the 15-29 age group, unemployment in that group had fallen to 14.8 per cent in 2010 from 16.1 per cent in 2009. Absolute poverty was currently down to 7.6 per cent. Steps were being taken to meet the information and communication technology needs of the country, particularly in rural communities, by means of multi-service information technology centres. The goal was to increase IT penetration to 75 per cent of the country by 2016.

22. The Government aimed to reduce poverty and upgrade productivity and rural living standards through increased employment opportunities in rural areas, with an enabling environment to be ensured by means of infrastructure development. The country had made progress in rehabilitating and reintegrating 667 former child combatants by providing education and vocational training. Lastly, he pointed out that Sri Lanka had hosted two youth-related events in 2011 and hoped to host the United Nations World Youth Conference in 2014.

23. **Mr. Bamba** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the reports of the Secretary-General on social development made it clear that without economic growth, Governments could provide no guarantee of stable or decent employment or make lasting investments in essential social programmes. States undergoing domestic crises in addition to the global economic crisis faced an even more acute situation in terms of providing for the well-being of their citizens.

24. The people of Côte d'Ivoire were in the process of recovering from the effects of 10 years of human rights violations and bad governance. In response to the many challenges in the area of social development, the new Government had undertaken a range of actions. The President had made all public health services, including maternity care, free to the poorest sectors. Following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society had been made a priority. Significant measures had been taken to increase young people's access to employment, including through direct training and support programmes and investment in small and medium-sized businesses. In addition, the educational system had been reformed to improve access for girls and women.

25. The family had been given a leading role in promoting social cohesion throughout the national

reconciliation process. The Government was also seeking the peaceful repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons. Lastly, he thanked the donors, international organizations and non-governmental organizations that had made the many advancements in the country possible and stressed that much still remained to be done.

26. **Mr. Ahmed** (Bangladesh) said that the Government had formulated an allowance programme for 286,000 insolvent persons with disabilities, having allocated the equivalent to $24 million to that programme during 2010-2011. That coverage was to be expanded in coming years. His country was encouraging and implementing all-inclusive development programmes to eradicate poverty and terrorism, create jobs, eliminate discrimination, and develop education and manpower.

27. Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, Bangladesh had reduced normative gaps in terms of addressing the issue of disabilities at the global level. The country supported the request to increase the meeting time of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from two to four weeks per year. Lastly, he noted that it was important for the developed countries to meet their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of GDP for official development assistance to the developing countries and 0.2 per cent to the least developed countries (LDCs).

28. **Mr. Al-Siri** (United Arab Emirates) said that his Government, out of its conviction that achieving social development was fundamental to the consolidation of peace, security and stability in the world, had adopted a foreign policy that centred on economic and social cooperation and the provision of development and humanitarian assistance to developing countries. The United Arab Emirates had pledged and disbursed over one billion dollars in grants and loans to development and humanitarian programmes in 120 countries.

29. Tangible progress achieved by his Government under its development strategy included the total eradication of poverty and the provision of universal education, health care and social security. Efforts were also being made to combat diseases, empower women, care for the ageing and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

30. **Mr. Al-Shamsi** (United Arab Emirates), speaking as a youth delegate, said that persons aged 15 to 24 made up 53 per cent of his country's population. As part of its comprehensive development strategy, the United Arab Emirates had established several mechanisms that addressed youth-related issues, including the Ministry of Culture and Youth and the General Authority of Youth and Sports Welfare. Moreover, by guaranteeing free education at all levels, his Government gave youth an active role in developing their society. Awareness-raising campaigns on such health issues as smoking, drug use and HIV/AIDS targeted the young as well.

31. Continued economic growth had contributed to improving the standard of living and guaranteeing secure sources of income to large numbers of youth of both genders. Government efforts to involve the youth in the political process and decision-making included giving the right to vote to all citizens 21 years of age or above and setting the minimum age to stand for office at 25 years, leading to increased voter participation rates among the young.

32. The rapidly changing job market had led to the rise in unemployment in several countries, including the United Arab Emirates. Relevant Government agencies were working to confront the challenges arising from globalization and job insecurity, encouraging youth to build leadership skills and collaborate productively in society, in addition to implementing economic policies aimed at finding work opportunities for youth in the public and private sectors. In closing, he expressed appreciation for the State's willingness to benefit from the energy and capabilities of young people in building the nation.

33. **Mr. Al-Yaqoobi** (Oman) said that the Ministry of Social Development and other relevant bodies in his country were exerting great efforts to guarantee a life with dignity and a just and equitable society for all Omanis. Oman's current five-year development plan centred on human development in general and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in particular. His Government attached particular importance to the needs of persons with disabilities, as evinced by its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 and adoption of a law on their care and rehabilitation in the same year.

34. Oman had also established a committee to monitor the implementation of the Convention. Moreover, his country was working to provide

technical and vocational education to persons with disabilities; incorporate the issues faced by persons with disabilities into national development plans so as to integrate them into society and promote their equality; promote technical cooperation in that regard, and train professionals working with persons with disabilities in the use of modern technology for education, training, and rehabilitation.

35. **Mr. Fiallo** (Ecuador) said that he was concerned that the goal of living well had not been given its due centrality in the MDGs and the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Social Development. It was a priority for Ecuador, which in the past four years had trebled its investments in social development. The effects of poverty had been reduced in recent years, and programmes to improve access to and quality of health, education, and housing were being implemented. Eradication of poverty was the goal for 2013, with the use of an inter-sector strategy to provide entrepreneurial financial training and resources as a way of helping to improve conditions for mothers and their families.

36. Since March 2010, a campaign had been under way to promote protection of domestic workers, with a guaranteed salary, maximum number of hours, and inclusion in a contributory social security system. Another aim was improvement of the lot of the disabled. The challenge was to identify them, particularly those living in remote areas, in an effort to ensure their social inclusion pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

37. **Ms. Klein Solomon** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IMO)) said that older and younger migrants and migrants with disabilities had been particularly affected by the current global crisis. Older migrants faced linguistic and cultural challenges and challenges in gaining access to health-care systems. Young migrants tended to integrate more quickly into their new environment, and thus played a key role in the integration of their families and as a main source of income for families back home.

38. Policies that incorporated access to education and skills acquisition needed to be given consideration. Migrants with disabilities needed access to disability systems, including incorporation of culture and language concerns. Lastly, IOM suggested that specific issues faced by migrants should be incorporated in social development policies.

39. **Ms. Brennen-Haylock** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that food price increases, climate change, lack of employment opportunities for youth and persistent social and gender inequalities represented a risk for social development, economic growth and stability. According to FAO estimates, some 925 million persons were undernourished, and more than 56 per cent of deaths among pre-school children in the developing world were ascribable to the effects of malnutrition on diseases. FAO stood ready to assist member countries in formulating action to achieve international development goals and commitments.

40. The FAO publication *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011* indicated that giving women the same access as men to agricultural resources could increase production on women's farms in developing countries by 20 to 30 percent. That could raise total agricultural production in developing countries and thus reduce the number of hungry people in the world. Gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision-making in rural areas was a key FAO objective for the coming 10 years. Rural labour markets suffered from the problems created by instability of employment, the uncertainties of agricultural production, and limited social protection for workers. FAO supported countries seeking to achieve gender-equitable, gainful, and stable rural employment.

41. The youth population was increasing rapidly in developing countries, with more than 60 percent of the population being under 25 in some countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Underemployment among young people potentially contributed to social unrest, crime, and armed conflict. FAO was promoting and supporting initiatives that improved opportunities for young people to participate in decent work. FAO welcomed the launch of the International Year of Cooperatives because of the contribution made by those organizations in meeting food demands.

42. **Mr. Cassidy** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the 100th session of the International Labour Conference held in June 2011 had adopted the Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers (Convention No. 189) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 201 to improve the working

conditions of an estimated 53 million domestic workers world-wide, most of them women or girls and many of them migrant workers.

43. Also adopted at the session was a resolution on social protection (social security), reconfirming the role of social security as a human right and a social and economic necessity for countries at all levels of development. The resolution sought rapid implementation of national social protection floors to promote access to social security transfers and social services. The Social Protection Floor Advisory Group coordinated the preparation of a report that would serve as an advocacy and policy tool and provide general guidance on global and regional policies and strategies to support implementation of the floor in developing countries and address poverty issues in developed countries.

44. The economic crisis had had a dramatic impact on young job-seekers. At the 2011 Labour Conference, four panels of young leaders had been established to review recent developments in the region and identify areas for work-related collective actions. In 2011, ILO had developed partnerships with eight major companies in the chocolate and cocoa industry to combat child labour practices in cocoa-growing communities in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Lastly, in June 2011 the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women had signed a memorandum of understanding with ILO in Geneva calling for cooperative actions in combating sex discrimination and protecting domestic workers.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.